

AN

INAUGURAL ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

New-York Academy of Medicine,

JANUARY 16, 1861.

BY JAMES ANDERSON, M. D., PRESIDENT.

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PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE ACADEMY.  
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New-York :

WILLIAM A. WHEELER, STATIONER AND PRINTER,

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## A D D R E S S .

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*Fellows of the New-York Academy of Medicine—Gentlemen :*

As I am about to enter upon the duties of the high office to which by your suffrages I have been called, permit me to express my due appreciation and grateful sense of the honor and distinction which you have thus conferred upon me. The many and weighty responsibilities connected with the proper discharge of the office of President of the New-York Academy of Medicine have made me hesitate in accepting this trust at your hands. I cannot but remember the high position and distinguished talents of the eminent men who have heretofore filled this chair, and with such names as Stearns and Francis, and Mott and Wood, and Stevens and Cock, Smith, Parker, Batchelder, and last, though not least, Watson, as my predecessors, some diffidence on my part is pardonable, at least. Did time permit, it would be pleasant to particularize the varied abilities and high accomplishments with which these gentlemen have severally discharged the duties of, and added dignity to the office. Far as I may come short of their standard, I may yet rely upon your indulgence, in an

honest effort to advance the interest and usefulness of the Academy, and relying confidently upon the aid of the able counsel at my right.

Of the rise and progress of the Academy, and of the results which it has already attained, it is not necessary for me to speak. Enough to say, that its meetings have been generally well attended, and the discussions, conducted with gentlemanly courtesy, have been always profitable, and have frequently displayed a very high order of professional ability. Many papers read before the Academy have reflected great honor upon their authors, and your Transactions will long be referred to, as authority in the science and practice of medicine commanding respect. Shall not the future fulfill the promise of the past? Much yet remains to be accomplished, and, instead of offering any professional paper to-night, I propose to confine my remarks to some suggestions designed to promote the greater interest and efficiency of the Academy itself. And first, you will permit me to urge the importance of a cordial unity of purpose and concert of action: this is the first element of success in every association of men. In the days of their early struggles and triumphs, the Netherlands had for their motto, "*En dracht, maakt macht.*" (In union is strength.) Let our motto also be, "*Union;*" civil and political, if you will, but professional certainly. Drops of water make up the mighty ocean, and grains of sand form the extended shores which are its barriers. Who can estimate the results of a vigorous and combined effort of the profession in this city, for a single year, in the cause of medical science? What city on this side the

Atlantic affords equal facilities for professional acquirement? and, with a combination of well directed labors, why may not its faculty become pre-eminent in all, as it is already in some of the departments of medical science? All that is needed for this is, that concert of action, and free, enlightened interchange of thought, opinions and facts which it is the design of the Academy to afford. In its corporate capacity, the Academy is designed to be the great medical congress of the city, a bond of union to the profession, and the organ of its concentrated action.

Secondly, permit me to call your attention to some of the duties and obligations which our organization imposes. The second article of the Constitution declares the object of the Academy to be: 1st. The cultivation of medical science; 2d. The advancement of medical character and the honor of the profession; 3d. To elevate the standard of medical education; 4th. The promotion of the public health.

To prosecute these objects is the duty, as it should be the pleasure of every man who is worthy of a place in the profession. This duty is doubly incumbent upon us, since we have declared it to be our purpose, and that for which our association was incorporated. And that we might enjoy every facility for attaining these high objects, the legislature has left us well nigh unrestricted in power. In the language of the charter, we are incorporated "for the purpose of promoting medical science by such means as to them (meaning ourselves) shall appear *expedient* and *proper*." What more could be asked or granted? and what more is needed, except that, appreciating our high responsi-



bilities and duties, we address ourselves to the work with a concentration of aim and effort?

Fully according every facility and right to local, private and social clubs or associations, and recognising the advantages of a free and familiar interchange of opinions and practices which they afford; yet the Academy of Medicine may possess advantages of a higher order, towards which these local associations may be auxiliary. As in that glorious Union of the States, (for which so many hearts are now trembling, and the integrity of which may God preserve,) each separate State retaining its own government, yet finds its interest promoted in a union of the whole, so these local associations may enhance their own importance and usefulness by a union and representation in our Medical Congress, the New-York Academy of Medicine, which knows no North or South, no East or West; our confederacy consisting of the Kappa Lambda, the New-York Medical and Surgical Society, the Harveian Circle, the Pathological Society, the New-York Medical Association, the New-York Medico-Chirurgical College, and our colleges, hospitals and dispensaries, the members of which are all Fellows and equals. By the familiar discussions of these several circles, you will be better prepared for the investigations of the Academy, and, with greater confidence in your own conclusions, you will come to lay them before the public, for the benefit of others and the advancement of science.

Gentlemen, I need not remind you that it is a contracted, selfish spirit, unbecoming the profession, and characteristic of charlatans and patent medicine mak-



ers, which seeks to conceal and monopolize the results of its own observations and investigations. A man that loves his profession or sympathizes with suffering humanity, will delight to extend the resources and contribute to the success of the healing art. This is an age of discoveries, and you are all aware of the advance which medical science has made within the last fifty years. The profession in this city have not been behind their brethren in progress, and I trust the past is but an earnest of what is yet to be attained. Who is prepared to estimate the amount and importance of scientific knowledge which the members of this Academy may obtain and impart within a single year? Who can estimate its effect upon the position and influence of the profession in the community? and who would not rejoice with generous pride, that any or all of us were better prepared to relieve with promptness the ills of suffering humanity, whether as the result of his own or others' labors or investigations? And this suggestion commends itself to those of you, gentlemen, who by your superior attainments have reached a high position in the profession. Freely to impart from the rich stores of your acquirement, for the benefit of your associates, and through them of the profession and public at large, cannot diminish, but must greatly enhance your personal consideration and professional fame. Every man is, indeed, fully entitled to all the credit and profits of the results of his own industry and skill, but experience has shown that in our profession both of these are best secured by an early and free publication. The profession have a right to expect this, and suffering humanity

demand it. "To do good, and to communicate, forget not."

In looking over the roll of the Fellows of the Academy you will find, with the exception of a few worthy names, the talent and eminence of the profession in the city pledged to the promotion of its interests and its usefulness. The reputation of the Academy is well known at home and respected abroad. No medical gentleman in the city, whatever may be his position or abilities, can be indifferent to its success, or unaffected by its reputation. In his travels and correspondence, as well as in the community in which he dwells, he must be more or less associated with its name and affected by its position. The appreciation of his fellows will commonly be the standard of his appreciation abroad, and by the laity at home. For their own sake, then, as well as for the sake of elevating the standard of medical education among us, the Academy has special claims upon the more gifted and eminent of the profession in our city.

To the younger members of the Academy I may also be permitted to suggest, that, with them especially, duty and interest combine to secure their attendance and best endeavors here. The discussions and papers heard at these meetings may be worth more than gold to them, if, with the modesty which is the mark of genius, and the patient assiduity which is the guaranty of success, they are willing to wait their turn and title to eminence. It may come sooner than they expect, and they have no time to lose in preparation for its responsibilities. If I might offer a word of advice, it would be that they should apply

themselves diligently to the various departments of medical science, until they have obtained a tolerable mastery of the whole, after which they may more advantageously direct their studies, if they choose, to some specialty, which they may find in unison with their tastes and tendencies. The instincts of a gentleman will dictate that respectful courtesy to his seniors which he in turn would hope to receive under similar circumstances. But in honorable acquirement they need have no scruples in seeking to overtake their predecessors, or even in excelling them if they can. It will not be strange, however, if in proportion to their real acquisitions, they become also more distrustful of themselves. And yet they should not be such close and servile followers of any man as to have their own minds blinded by the dust of his errors. The advantages of the discussions in this place will be best secured by informing yourselves beforehand by the study of the best authors. Your object should be to arrive at *truth*, and not victory or distinction. Let me suggest to you also, for your own advancement and that of others, that you undertake at once the task of preparing with care a paper on some subject, to be read before the Academy, within the year; whether the effort be successful or not, yet the effort itself will benefit you greatly.

A few words now as to the machinery of the Academy, and certain specific duties required by the constitution and by-laws.

The fifteenth article of the by-laws requires that "The sections shall bring before the Academy, at its stated meetings, or as otherwise ordered, such mat-

ters as pertain to the several departments respectively assigned to them, as subjects for discussion or other action. They shall severally appoint each year two or more members to read original papers before the Academy; they may also originate and investigate new subjects for discussion." By a proper and faithful attention to the requirements of this section, the Academy will always have subjects of interest before it, and work enough to do. This is the most effectual method for promoting its progress and usefulness.

In this connection, let me also call your attention to the duties of the council; they are required to "nominate such Fellows as are to be appointed to deliver series of discourses or lectures on scientific subjects before the Academy." Thus our laws wisely provide for calling forth the labors and professional acquirements of our members for the benefit of all, and I fully believe that the great objects of our organization can only be attained by carrying out the regulations to which we are voluntarily pledged. Shall it not be done?

Finally, gentlemen, permit me to refer, in a few words, to an incidental advantage of our association, in cultivating what the profession so greatly needs, a mutual sympathy in each others trials and triumphs, an *esprit de corps*, which leads each one to desire the welfare of all, and to rejoice in the successes of others, as being himself a partner to their fortunes. The etiquette of the profession is rigid, and ought to be rigidly observed, and it is a part of the business of the Academy to maintain and enforce it. But beyond all requirements of mere etiquette, we need

more fellowship of feeling and fraternal unity. This will make us not only jealous conservators of each other's reputation, but willing coadjutors and aids in any critical emergency. The fair fame of the profession will be dear to us, next to our own good name, and in aiding and advancing each other we shall find our own progress, usefulness and happiness increased. The Academy of Medicine brings us together, and affords the facilities for cultivating this spirit, and in proportion as by our hearty and united efforts the objects of our association are advanced, we shall also be bound together in the ties of professional fraternity.

